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- **THE SPOOR OF AN ANGEL:**
  ROY CAMPBELL
- **BABBITT JUNIOR:**
  PETER VIERECK
- **WILFRED OWEN:**
  POETRY, PITY AND PROPHECY:
  DENNIS S. R. WELLAND

OTHER CONTRIBUTORS:
DELMAS W. ABBOTT, L. A. MacKAY,
NICHOLAS JOOST, DESMOND PACEY,
JOHN SUTHERLAND, THOMAS I. COOK

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Continuing *THE CANADIAN REVIEW OF MUSIC AND ART*, *PREVIEW* and *FIRST STATEMENT*.

THE SPOOR OF AN ANGEL

The harper who discloses,
Hair-triggered on the sight with strands of fire,
The tiger in the roses,
His harp of burning wire —
And with the nerves of danger strings his lyre:
The archer by whose science
The index and the eye as one became,
In rhythmical alliance,
To slay with flawless aim —
Or limn the flying forms in hues of flame;
By whom the eagle's feather,
The arrow-tufting plume that steered the dart,
Stained, with the point together,
Red, in the bison's heart,
First brushed the cavern wall with human art:
With him to be their shepherd
The zebras strum the wind with silver bars:
It was his aim that peppered
The velvet of the leopard,
Like midnight, with the buckshot of the stars.
His hunting brought me luck
A woman by his assegai was struck,
And, volted to the marrow
By that supernal arrow,
Fell kicking in the lilies like a buck.
I strain my failing powers
Yet only find the cinders where he camped,
Though by his spoor of flowers
I trail him through the hours,
The roses that his flying steeds have champed.
The fletcher and the farrier
Who shod the flight of all fleet-footed things
He shot the hawk and harrier
And swordfish from his slings —
Projectiles of a joy that has no barrier.
A legion of disguises

He captains. He devises every day
Miraculous surprises,
And as a bird arises
Where, as a fish, he vanished into spray.
So feathered, finned, and fanned,
All speary strengths were formed to his design —
The sinews of my hand,
The wind-rows in the sand,
The bonework of the tunny's vaulting spine;
Flames, ripples, ferns, and clouds,
That speak the selfsame language of surprise
Where seraphs weave their shrouds,
If only to our eyes,
In fiercer resurrections to arise.
The handwriting's the same.
The style is personal. All solar traffic
Of feathers, fronds, or flame
Indicate his one name
And signature. The cyphers are seraphic.
I seek him, wait his hour,
And contemplate the forms of speed and power
Till I could almost capture
The trance of frozen rapture
That moors the kestrel by the sailing tower.

ROY CAMPBELL.

Babbitt Junior

Peter Viereck

ABATTOIR AHEAD

Needed, an abattoir for Sacred Cows.

Here are two exasperatingly sacred bovines. Sacred not to the majority of Americans but to the more indignant readers of these pages. Sacred to a majority of that strategic small minority, the respectable (meaning cautiously daring) intellectuals.

1. The stereotyped liberal progressive in politics.
2. The hermetic, avant-garde mandarin in literature.

The stereotyped progressive has made a professional new conformism out of nonconformism: "Why can't you be an independent, convention-defying liberal — just like everybody else?"

The avant-garde mandarin is still revolting against a too crude clarity, a too insensitive communication in literature. The Pound and Eliot revolt was needed in 1912. Today, the obscure Bad Writing is as stereotyped as was the clear Bad Writing of the lingering Victorians of 1912. Today, the second generation of Eliotizers and New Critics are the parasitic heirs of paths already blazed and "battles with Victorians" won long, long ago. While the trail blazers have become the Sacred Cows of the big magazines, their imitators — the *nouveaux* New Critics — have become the Sacred Calves of the Little Magazines. "Why can't you produce literature that shocks the masses — just like everybody else?"

THE NEW PHILISTINISM

Ever since Matthew Arnold borrowed from Heinrich Heine the word "philistine"[1] to describe an insensitive, cliché-addicted conformism, the world has had certain indefinable but readily recognizable connotations for the English-speaking world. These have been immortalized in their American application by Sinclair Lewis's book, *Babbitt.*

Today philistinism has acquired a new content, a new set of

[1] Arnold: "Our puritan classes present a defective type of religion, a narrow range of intellect and instruction, a stunted sense of beauty, a low standard of manners." Whether or not he read Arnold, Lewis has not essentially added to this definition in his amusing caricatures of 60 years later.

conditioned reflexes. It is still mongering clichés, but the clichés have changed. And the only people still using the old-fashioned epithets "philistine" or "Babbitt" are the Babbitts themselves. The main activity of the new-style philistine has become the facile game of philistine-baiting.

Perhaps every twenty years, the eternal Babbitt dons a new name and a new disguise. Today George Babbitt's imaginary son bears the fancier name I invented for him: Gaylord. George Babbitt boosts and flag-waves; hates slackers and political progressives; and distrusts art. Gaylord Babbitt says: "I go for art and progress in a big way. If there's one thing I can't stand, it's a Babbitt."

The essence of all Babbittry, senior or junior, is stereotypes. The stereotypes of Babbitt Senior are the following words and connotations: solid, reliable, sound, businesslike, wholesome, and knows-how-to-meet-a-payroll. Junior's stereotyped words and connotations are: vital, dynamic, functional, unpuritanical, forward-looking, the masses, and the common man.

The new Babbittry has two different aspects, one literary and one political:

1. *Literary.* A typical book review in a typical Little Magazine unconsciously proclaims Gaylord's would-be-sophisticated line for literature: "We unfortunately miss in this book that rich, surrealistic obscurity which our modern taste has been led to expect." The give-away phrase here is "led to expect." The justification of the modernist revolt against Victorian clichés was to give the public what it did *not* expect; hence, quite properly shocking the public of Babbitt Senior by surrealism, Joycian cross-references, and obscurity in poetry. While Babbitt *père* smugly denounces this obscurity as Long-hair Stuff, Babbitt *fils* with an exactly equal smugness applauds it as à-la-mode. The way to improve a modern art public is by difficult and noble simplicity, not easy obscurity. What shocks, what utterly outrages the Gaylords of modern literary criticism, who dominate the more strategic magazines and English departments, is the movement back to communication in poetry.

2. *Political. Père* was a Republican. *Fils* knows it's smart to be left: "As my favorite sophisticated poetess, Dorothy Parker, so aptly put it, 'It's no longer I but We!' " To prove this point, I quote from a recent article by Robert Bendiner, former associate editor of *The Nation* and one of America's ablest liberals:

"Out of some 140,000,000 people in the United States, at least 139,500,000 are liberals, to hear them tell it, "liberal" having become

a rough synonym for virtuous, decent, humane, and kind to animals. Rare is the citizen who can bring himself to say, "Sure I'm a Conservative. What of it?" And any American would sooner drop dead than proclaim himself a reactionary."

No wonder even Senator Taft makes a big point of calling himself "a liberal." Here is the advertisement put out by a brand-new liberal monthly named *Exposé: "Exposé* is independent and liberal, as the great majority of the American people are independent and liberal." . . . To be independent "like the great majority," does that not spoil the original J. S. Millsian ideal of the liberal bravely defying "the great majority" and its mob clichés?

Actually Gaylord, even at his height in the 1940's, never represented the "great majority" of *the* country. What he represented was the great majority of *his* country. I refer to that unmapped country otherwise known as the intellectual cocktail parties of New York, Boston, and the choicer eastern universities.

Smart to be leftist: not in that big, funny Outside World, of course. But in his own small, cozy world of upper-middlebrow professors and the more presentable and top-drawer journalists, G.B. knows it is smart to have a reputation of "believing in" revolutionary mass-progress. In some vague and safe and supercilious kind of way — oh, out there in the sticks in Asia, say.

Like Shakespeare's hero, G.B. complains, "I lack advancement." And what can help your advancement better in those particular circles than to be regarded with awe as a bold (though never *too* bold) baiter of G.B.'s three Suspected Categories of American life, the three horrendous phalanxes of The Witch Hunt: drunken Legionnaires, sober businessmen, and all Irishmen?

Young Babbitt gets around a lot — what with all those art galleries and *soirées* that are dominated by his flashing repartee — young Babbitt gets around; and if you start thinking, you realize that hardly a day goes by in lower Manhattan and many campuses without your running into him. His name, his face may seem to change. But you can always spot him by the phrases he uses; by his enlightened, emancipated attitude toward everything — in life or art or politics; and even more, by his awareness of how enlightened he is and by the complacency that such awareness gives him. It is the same complacency poor, reactionary old Babbitt Senior used to feel when he strolled through Zenith, Ohio, long ago in that other epoch before 1929 — before the world changed on him and laughed at his ideas.

In contrast, even now almost nobody laughs — dares to laugh — at the ideas of Babbitt Junior. After all, who can dare to laugh at Progress? As his Boswell, I have been recording G.B.'s Table Talk for a long time now. This recording is a time-capsule of the dominant ideas of an epoch, 1929-50. The '29 crash killed off Senior's epoch. Certain world events of the 1950's are at last bringing Junior's epoch to an end. Yet Gaylord himself never ends; always lands on his feet by adjusting his line, even somehow (wait and see) to a post-1952 Republican bandwagon.

But why not let Gaylord speak for himself in the next chapter? (Via a strictly surrealist dialogue.)

THE TABLE TALK OF GAYLORD BABBITT: AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW IN CAFE CHIC[1]

Only yesterday I had lunch with Gaylord in what he called "one of my little French restaurants." Being in a hurry, I blunderingly suggested having hamburgers at Childs. How quickly he put me in my place, snapping:

"How provincial of you! Speed, what does it get you? Stomach ulcers, that's what being commercial-minded gets you. We second-generation Babbitts always take off two hours for lunch on account of it's more *civilisé*. Oh, poor P.V., will you never learn to be a Man of the World? Why, the way you talk, folks might think you're some Middle Westerner — I mean, some fellow who has never eaten the legs of a single frog!"

"Your wit is in fine fettle today, G.B.," I chortled appreciatively, writing down his epigram in my notebook. As we settled down in Café Chic instead of Childs, I asked him in open-mouthed admiration: "How do you insure so infallibly that your ideas on all subjects are always the most liberal possible, so that you're always protected, never giving anybody an opening to kid you as an old-fogey or an awful, narrow-minded businessman?"

Pouring himself an elegant demitasse of Sparkling Burgundy, his favorite beverage, he answered me frankly:

"That's easy as pie. For example, take politics. Whenever I have to choose between two political ideas, I always choose whatever idea is the more Advanced. If they're equally Advanced so that

[1] Written in 1947 (for a novel about the intellectuals of the 1940's). Revised up-to-date for 1951, as a time capsule to preserve a particular literary and political epoch now slowly drawing to a close.

I can't choose, then I read what my *Nation* and my *New Statesman* say about it. And as for the field of art and sex — you know, art, sex, that kind of thing — why, sometimes my thoughts are so Advanced that I tremble at my own daring. There's nothing more wonderful than being emancipated from medieval superstitions and fearlessly defying conventions. Why, there's no more fearless defier than I; I defy conventions right and left."

"As your Eckermann, I always feel I am boring you, asking you for crumbs of your wisdom. It's so difficult sitting here, eating with a genius, instead of reading him at a distance centuries later. Oh, G.B., what must I be like to become worthy of lunching with you? What kind of people do you tolerate? What pet hates have you that I can tactfully avoid?"

"Unfortunately for you, I only tolerate folks who are suave. 'Suave'? — oh, by that I mean anybody who can, on short notice, name an adequate little French restaurant in the East Fifties. And you know what's my latest hate? Not the low-brows: that's all *les neiges de* yesteryear. It's those middle-brows. They're even worse than low-brows. For example, a high-brow like me and a low-brow like you can get along together fine. We can talk for hours enthusing over the comic strips: each from our quite different viewpoints, y'understand; my viewpoint analytical, as befits a social observer of life's *mores,* and your viewpoint toward the comics more spontaneous and naïve. Yes, I can get along with you low-brows, you refreshing primitives, but I'll never get along with those over-avid middle-brows. They're so pretentious; always trying to live beyond their intellectual means."

"A misunderstood dreamer like you," I replied with gentle understanding, "must have trouble finding any merely human company tolerable? Can it be that only Paris is your spiritual home? Is that why you brought me, with your exquisite taste, to this restaurant where they print the menus in the language of Robespierre and Proust?"

At the mention of that sacred city, which he had never visited in person but knew better than any visitor, Gaylord Babbitt clasped his artistic hands and was lost to this sordid American world. In his trance, he keened to himself:

"Gee, it must be glamorous to be out there on the Left Bank and sit there in some café, talking about brand-new Movements like Dada-ism and Folies Bergères and everything. And maybe at the table right smack next to me, nonchalantly sipping absinthe, there'd

be Sartre and Mistinguette and Louis Aragon and Alice B. Toklas, all four on a double-date together. Maybe it's the eternal bohemian in me, but I'm an incurable Artist of Life."

"Golly Gaylord, how come you always manage to pick just the Right Names in the world of lit-crit? I'm scared to open my mouth about criticism or even to mention the name of a single poet, lest it turn out to be a Wrong Name, so that everybody here at Café Chic would then laugh behind my back and think I'm slipping."

"The solution is to pick the right lit-crit culture-hero and ride his juggernaut like a roller coaster, no matter how sharply it twists and skids at the curves. I find it indispensable to have the Eliot literary school telling me when to dislike Milton and when I'm allowed to like Milton again. In precisely the same way, I found it indispensable to have a political line telling me in June, 1941, when it was an imperialist war and when it stopped being one."

This puzzled me, and I objected: "But the literary dictatorship you follow is by a medieval religious author, while your political line — slips! I mean *tendance* — is 100 per cent modern and progressive. Isn't that inconsistent?"

"Yes, there is that admitted inconsistency between my literary and political *tendances,* but a minor one. The major consistency between them is: both bait poor old daddy Babbitt; both are or used to be advance-guard; both get me elected into the intellectual élite. Only instead of daddy's Kiwanis-belongingness, my literary and political lines make me belong with all those dazzling, outrageously witty giants of Bloomsbury, Greenwich Village, and Piazza di Spagna."

"How do you giants recognize each other among all us pygmies of the intellect?" I asked.

"By the intonation of one single word: by the expression with which we say 'we.' Best example is to talk like The Master himself. I've spent hours memorizing every sentence in which Eliot uses the word 'we.' Then I repeat just those sentences every time I meet a London or New York celebrity who's trying to sniff out if I belong to the literary ins or the literary outs. It never fails. O the prestige and banquets of being a lonely *poète maudit!*"

"Tell me a couple of those sentences, pronouncing 'we' in the right voice," I pleaded. "Then maybe even I can learn how to talk about poetry."

"Well, I memorized that very short sentence in *The Sacred Wood* where he says: 'Agreed that we do not greatly enjoy Swinburne.' You gotta say that sentence in such a casual yet authoritative

tone that a whole praetorian guard of English departments and Little Magazines will exclaim in chorus: O the bliss of being part of that We, O the leper-agony of being excluded from it!"

"With all your scintillating *explications de texte,*" I marveled, "I guess you Olympians can follow the daily fluctuations of careers in art the same way your dad follows his stock market fluctuations."

"Yup, and with the same rush to sell short a loser and to buy on margin every day's winner."

"Teach me another example of a We-sentence, Gaylord, so I can some day prove worthy of associating with you winners."

"A different kind of We — this time pronounced with a tone of squeamish impatience — comes earlier in *The Sacred Wood,* where Eliot writes: 'We still hear that George Meredith is a master of prose, or even a profound philosopher.' Whenever I repeat that sentence at a Yale or Princeton literary forum, all of us belongers feel like members of Skull and Bones, snubbing some underbred cad. Picture the cad sidling up and sweatingly trying to ingratiate himself by saying too eagerly: 'George Meredith is a master of prose. George Meredith is even a profound philosopher.' "

This excerpt from the current book by Peter Viereck, *The Shame and Glory of the Intellectuals,* is reprinted with the permission of the author.

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FOR EDITH STEIN

1

Though terror deflect wisdom,
Your course soared into light
That caps such metamorphoses
From flesh through death to life.

From impious pyre and fire
Beyond symbols of our seeing
In that mandala past art,
Purged, you act and are.

O see our need to fuse
Our unfused acts and being.
Ask limits off our daring
To travel your strange flight.

2

Musagetes grasped, and you fled,
Laurel tree, eluded him by leaves,
Leaves brushing this world's light
With another splendor.

Yet seeking you, why do we find ashes?
The conventual grove sighs:
Learn of those ashes in a place of ashes.
We know. There we read the vision.

When winter came,
Your leaves had turned to tongues of fire
That crisped and fell.
Snow covered them.

They were first to go:
You gave them up.
As the year whitened,
Had you regrets?

Ice glazed the Pierian fountain
And the sun's car limped a brief circuit
When at winter solstice
Brutal woodsmen cut you down.

Stripped, sweet branches lopped,
In ovens you escaped,
Eluding those foresters by fire
Before a new year's thunder.

Christ, save this world by fire!
Christ, eat our leaves with flame!

NICHOLAS JOOST.

Rabbits Flee the Burning Sedge Grass

Delmas W. Abbott

"Where's your mammy?" Papa asked when he came in from feeding the mules.

"Don't know," I told him. "She wasn't here when we got home from school."

"Did you come right home?"

"Yeah. We've been here about two hours. I guess Mama's over at Uncle Chester's. He got worse last night and started talking out of his head again."

"How'd you know that?"

"Lucy told us at school today."

Papa limped to the back porch and looked down the springhouse path toward Uncle Chester's. He put the toe of his thickshoe foot across the toe of his other foot, and it looked like a fat hound pup sleeping with its head on another pup. He stood that way for a while resting his weight on his good foot. When he took off his weather-worn straw hat his hair was wet, and it was pressed flat against his head where the sweatband had circled it. The upper part of his forehead was white, but the rest of his face was as brown as a dead oak leaf. He took his blue bandana from his hind pocket and wiped the sweat from his face; then he ran his fingers through his bushy black hair to loosen it. He shifted his weight to his crippled foot for a second, and I noticed little clods of dirt caught in the cuffs of his overalls. He had been plowing all day in the field he had rented from Jesse Wilburn.

"Well, if she aint here, the milking aint done. Git the milk bucket, Billy. You go git some nubbins, Vernon. No. You stay here and start a fire in the cook stove. I'll git the nubbins," Papa said.

"We've already fed the hogs and chickens," I said. "And I cut some wood while Billy gathered the eggs."

"Your mammy ort to — Come on, Billy."

Billy went with Papa to the barn, and I went into the kitchen

to build a fire. Darkness was settling, and whippoorwills started hollering up in the woods behind the orchard.

Mama had been late with supper a lot of times since Uncle Chester took the fever. Papa didn't like for her to go over to Uncle Chester's so often, but he never said much to her about it. Sometimes Mama just came home long enough to cook supper; then she went back to help Aunt Cindy with Uncle Chester.

One night Papa asked her, "Anybody else a-settin up with Chester at nights?"

Mama said, "Mostly just me and Cindy. Me being his only relation, there ain't nobody else much to do it. Sometimes Lizzie Gooch comes, and once in a while Tom Watson."

"Tom Watson's a good one to be a-settin up with sick folks. I thought he'd think hisself too fine for anything like that. I never knowed he cared anything about Chester anyhow."

"He does a heap of good with sick folks, and he don't smell like a mule stall neither. It does a sick person good to have somebody like him around."

"Was he there last night?" Papa asked.

"He come over for a little while, but he couldn't stay long though."

"Had to git back and tend his still, I reckon; or maybe make a crooked trade with somebody."

Tom Watson lived over on Clear Creek in a house by himself. A path takes off from the road just this side of Uncle Chester's and leads over the ridge to the place. Tom used to spend most of the time trading horses, shotguns, watches, anything anybody wanted to trade. He hunted and trapped in the winter and bought possum, muskrat, or polecat hides when anybody else had them to sell. He never did much farming, and everybody said he kept a still running in the brush above Clear Creek. Nearly every time I ever saw him he was wearing his Sunday clothes. It seemed like he wore them for every day. He was always good to Billy and me. If we happened to see him when we went to the store with Mama, he would always buy us some candy and talk to Mama for a while, but he never would come to our house to visit us.

I poured a little coal oil on the wood in the cook stove and got the fire started; then I got a panful of potatoes from the smokehouse and started to peel them so we could get supper started. Papa usually liked to get to bed early.

I had about half of the potatoes peeled when Mama came into

the kitchen. She was breathing fast like she had been running. She took her checkered gingham apron from a nail behind the cook stove and hung her bonnet where the apron had been; then she took a paper taper out of a tin can on the shelf above the kitchen table, lifted a cap from the stove, poked the end of the taper into the flame, and lit the lamp with it. She took a cloth from the dishes stacked in the middle of the dining table; then she put the lamp beside the dishes.

"You set the table, Vernon," Mama said. "I'll finish the taters. Put some water in the teakettle, too, and set it on the fire to boil."

Mama finished the potatoes and put them into the three-tit-legged kettle to cook. She was mixing dough for hoecakes when Papa and Billy came in from milking. Mama didn't look up. She just kept on mixing the dough with her hands, stirring the meal and buttermilk and putting in salt from the gourd that hung on the wall. Once in a while she pushed hair out of her face with the back of her wrist, and sometimes she looked to see if she was getting dough on her Sunday dress. Mama always liked to wear her good clothes when she went to Uncle Chester's.

Papa took the milk over to the dining table and strained it into a brown and white crock; then he put the bucket on the kitchen table for Mama to wash after supper. He took his straw hat into the front room and hung it on a nail by the dresser. When he limped back into the kitchen he leaned a chair against the wall by the door. The chair's hickory bark bottom squeaked when he sat down. He looked out into the dark for a while, saying nothing; then he began watching Mama.

"You ort to git home earlier, Sary," he said. "A man gits hungry plowing all day, and these younguns ort to eat on time and git to bed early."

Mama didn't say a word to Papa. She poured the dough into the hoecake baker, put some more wood into the stove, and came over to see how I'd set the table.

"Now run to the smokehouse and git some shoulder meat, Vernon," she said. "Bring a jar of blackberries, too."

I hurried out to the smokehouse. Billy was sitting on the ground in the yard playing with his hound pup. The moon was already up, and it was almost full. Bats had come out of the eaves of the house and were ducking at night bugs. I got the shoulder meat and blackberries and hurried back to Mama with them.

As I went into the kitchen, I saw that Mama's face was red. Papa was saying, "I don't know what you're going to do when Chester dies or gits well one or tother."

"Will, I'm a-gittin mighty tard of - - - " Mama saw me and grabbed the meat from my hand. "Give the berries to your papy so's he can unscrew the lid," Mama said; then she sliced the meat into the skillet to fry.

I watched the veins in Papa's fingers puff out as he unscrewed the jar lid. When he got the lid off, he skimmed a layer of fuzzy blue-looking mould from the top of the berries with a spoon; then he threw the mould into the slop bucket and pulled his chair up to the head of the table where he always ate.

Mama began taking up the hoecakes and potatoes. She put them into dishes and brought them to the table.

"How do you expect me to hurry, if you're going to set there in my way?" Mama asked Papa.

"You could have your cooking done when I git in from work. I suppose you're hurrying now so's you can git back over there."

"I an't going tonight. Lizzie Gooch is going to set up with Chester."

"Anybody going to set with her?"

"I an't heard of nobody else."

"Is that why you - - - "

"Holler for Billy," Mama said to me. "Supper's ready."

She brought the meat from the skillet.

Billy and I sat on a bench on the side of the table next to the wall, and Mama sat across from us.

Papa said, "We thank Thee, Lord, for Thy many blessings. We thank Thee for these victuals before us. Bless them to the nourishment of our bodies. In Christ's name we ast it. A-men."

After supper Papa took Billy and me out to the front porch to sit with him a while before we went to bed, and Mama stayed in the kitchen to wash the dishes.

"Git my pipe, Vernon," Papa said to me, but Billy ran ahead of me and got it.

We liked to watch Papa smoke and blow rings we could stick our fingers into. We liked to sit out on the porch with him. Sometimes he would tell us about the Clear Creek flood that washed away a lot of houses one year, or he would tell us about the time the Hatton boys bushwhacked three of the Gillum boys. Sometimes Papa just sat looking off into the dark and rubbed his fingers through our hair.

"Well, boys, I'll finish plowing the Jesse Wilburn field tomorrow. I'll git it drug and harrowed in a day or two, and then I'll be ready to begin on that field down tother side of the springhouse."

That pleased Billy and me. We were anxious for Papa to get to that field because it was grown up thick with sedge grass as high as my head. The grass was dry and would burn like dead pine wood covered with coal oil. We wanted to see the flames shoot up high as a house and sweep across the field so fast the rabbits would have to run to flee the burning sedge grass to a safer place along the spring branch.

"Can we help burn the sedge grass then?" Billy asked.

"I reckon you can. The flames will make a pretty sight in the full moon, too. I've just been waiting for a full moon. You boys seen any rabbits down there, young ones about half grown?"

"I saw two when I was taking water from the spring yesterday," Billy said.

"The fried hind legs of a half-grown rabbit'ud be mighty good in your school dinner, wouldn't it?" Papa asked.

"I would eat me one right now," I told him.

We sat out there a little while longer just listening to the whippoorwills, watching the bats, and resting ourselves. Then Papa said, "Well, I reckon it's bedtime. Your mammy must be in bed already. Git, you two. Run out behind the woodshed. We don't want any bed-wetting tonight. I guess I'd better go with you."

Mama was at home the next night when Billy and I got home from school. She had the milking done and supper ready by the time Papa got in from plowing and feeding. She was wearing her Sunday dress again, too.

Nobody said much at supper, and when we got through eating, Papa took Billy and me out to the front porch again. Papa didn't talk. He just sat with his chair leaning against a porch post. He put his good foot on a chair rung and let his crippled foot hang loose. He smoked his corncob pipe and rubbed my head with his hand. It was a cooler night, and the wind began to blow a little.

A fat toad hopped out from under the porch by Billy's feet. Billy eased off the porch and got a long stick to push behind the toad to make it think a snake was after it. The toad hopped fast hops around the corner of the house toward the chimney with Billy right after it.

I sat watching the stars, waiting for one more to push out of the dark so I could quit counting. I wanted to count nine stars

for nine nights in a row so on the ninth night I would dream about the girl I would marry when I got old enough. The stars didn't come out very fast because the moon was so bright. Every once in a while the moon went behind a little cloud and seemed to move faster because the wind pushed the clouds in front of it so fast. Papa's tobacco smoke looked like the clouds, and I wondered if it ever got up there and mixed with them.

Mama finished the dishes and came out to the porch.

"I'm going to set with Chester a while. Lizzie Gooch caint go tonight, and Cindy needs rest," Mama said.

"I think I'll walk over with you tonight," Papa said.

"Who'll stay here with the boys?"

"They can go, too. Git Billy, then run and ketch up with us," Papa said to me. "You can sleep on a pallet at Chester's."

Before I left to get Billy, Mama started back into the house. "I reckon I just won't go," she said. "No need for us both to go. I'll stay with the boys."

I thought Mama was mad when she went into the house and slammed the door.

Papa didn't say anything else. He just sat there real stilllike, frowning. I thought he looked mad, too. He forgot that he was smoking his pipe and just held it in his hand until the fire went out.

"Aint we going to Uncle Chester's?" I asked.

"No."

In a little while Mama put her head out the door and said, "Well, if you're going, why don't you git started."

"I changed my mind," Papa said. "You go."

In a minute the back door banged as Mama left the house.

Papa and I just sat there on the porch, and Billy was still playing somewhere. Papa didn't tell us to go to bed.

In about half an hour he knocked the ashes out of his pipe and went into the house without saying anything to me, but in a few minutes he came back out with his hat on and said, "How'd you like to burn the sedge grass field tonight?"

"I'd sure like it a right smart," I said.

"Git Billy then."

I found Billy with his toad cornered by the chimney. He was punching at it with his stick, but it was sulled and wouldn't move anymore.

"Quit poking that toad," I told him.

"Aw, I aint hurting it," he said.

"Papa wants us to help him burn the sedge grass field."

Billy dropped his stick and started running around to the front of the house when I told him about the sedge grass.

When we got back to the porch, Papa was coming out the door loading his double-barrel shotgun.

"Maybe we can shoot a rabbit for your school dinner tomorrow," he said. "If one flees the grass in the firelight."

We followed Papa down the spring patch as the wind started to blow a little harder, making the sedge grass in the field behind the springhouse lean with it. The moonlight made the grass look white and quivery. Up in the woods whippoorwills were hollering, and a screech owl was trilling lonesome-like. Tree frogs were trying to out-croak everything that was making noise, and bullfrogs were bellering in the cat-o-nine-tails along the spring branch. One ker-chugged into the water as we crossed to the sedge grass field. The wind was blowing away from us, and the grass leaned with it.

"Don't talk or make any noise. You'll scare the rabbits away," Papa told us.

Billy even tip-toed and scrouged up closer to me, and we kept still. Papa looked out across the field in all directions, and finally he said. "I reckon we'd better set it afire down the branch a little ways and then come back up here so's we can see anything that runs out."

When we got down there, Papa struck a match to one little bunch of sedge grass, and it started burning like it had coal oil poured on it. The blades became red-hot, curled up, and disappeared. By the time we got back to where we were going to watch for rabbits, the blazes were reaching up higher than the willows along the branch, and fire was sweeping and roaring across the field with the wind.

Papa stood still, holding his gun in his hands with both barrels cocked. He was watching the edge of the field as the fire moved along it. Billy and I saw one little rabbit run out, but it was too little to kill. A big one ran out, too, but Papa wouldn't shoot it because he said it might be a she with some little ones somewhere. He was waiting for one about half grown.

All of a sudden we saw Papa jerk his gun to his shoulder and fire both barrels. I looked the way he shot just in time to see a man who looked like Tom Watson fall face downward by the alder thicket the way the fire was going. The man didn't get up. I was scared, and Billy hung onto me with both hands.

I heard a woman scream, and then I saw Mama with her hair

blowing straight back as she ran in the sedge grass toward the man Papa had shot, but the fire cut Mama off, and she started running back toward the woods on the other side of the field. The fire was blowing close behind her. Then she stumbled, and I couldn't see her anymore.

Billy bawled. Papa dropped his gun and acted like he wanted to run out toward the fire, maybe run into it after Mama. He took a few steps into the fresh, black stubble, then he stopped and stared at the fire. He couldn't have run fast enough because of his crippled foot.

The blazes caught Mama, and I started running across the burnt stubble toward her, I heard her screaming to Papa, "Oh, God, I'm burning up! Help me, Will - - - Help me!"

I ran on across the burnt field almost to the place where Mama fell, but it was so hot I couldn't get any farther. Then I heard Papa shouting, "Come back here, Vernon! Come back!"

But I didn't go back. I stood watching the sedge grass burn. I had wanted to burn it, and now it was burning, and I didn't want it to burn, but I couldn't help it. I just stood there with my hands down at my sides and watched it.

Then Papa was there picking me up, limping, carrying me back. Billy was sitting on the ground crying. Papa put me down; then he got Billy and me by the hand and led us toward the house. He left his shotgun lying on the ground. He didn't say anything to us as he led us away from the burning field, but he squeezed my hand hard. We could hear the fire still crackling, but the flames were beginning to peter out.

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The Great Equestrians

John Sutherland

There is not the slightest doubt that modern literary decadence is now on its death-bed. All that was fathered by Joyce and Pound is obviously on the verge of complete extinction. As Edward Dahlberg phrased it in a recent issue of *Poetry Chicago,* "By now James, Pound, Eliot, Joyce are dowds, jades and trulls of Parnassus, and we are weary of them. It may be that they will be curios again in some other time, but now they do not provide the spectacle of remoteness so significant in literature". What is to follow this debacle of the moderns? There are increasing signs that the younger generation, weary as it is of a rabid experimentalism, is turning back to the School of the Great Equestrians. The Equestrians have provided one of the few oases in the wasteland of our times. While the rest of the literary world has been standing on its head, they alone have been seated firmly in the saddle. They have been virtually the one healthy vein in a diseased and corrupt body. As the twilight of the "moderns" deepens into darkness, we can anticipate the moment when these apostles of Equestrianism will come riding towards us over the sunny, dew-besprinkled meadows of the dawn. It will be a glorious dawn — perhaps one of the most glorious in the whole of literary history.

And who are the Great Equestrians? Their names are all familiar to you. The chief members of the School are G. K. Chesterton, D. H. Lawrence, Roy Campbell and C. S. Lewis: respectively the White Horse of Wessex, the Laughing Horse, the Talking Bronco, and the Lizard-Horse, in the order of their chosen equine rank. Of course, in the strict sense of the phrase, they do not form a literary school; at a casual glance they may even seem to be hideously ill-matched. But their spiritual bonds are undeniable. Alone among the writers of our century, they have displayed a mastery of the ramifications of equine symbolism. I would contend that that amounts to saying that they are the sole modern masters of the imagination. It is by no means insignificant that the imagination has been symbolized for centuries by the figure of a winged horse; and it is no mere accident that the winged horse has been excluded from our modern literary salons and never mentioned except in a whisper. Pegasus has fallen

into disrepute; only the Equestrians have cherished him and only the Equestrians can restore his power of flight. There are four supreme qualities symbolized by the horse with wings. All four are present to some degree in the writings of all four Equestrians; but I shall discuss each quality in turn in relation to the writer who gives it its most distinctive expression. I hope in this way to illustrate the difference between the true spirit of literature and its black abuse in the first decades of our century.

Let the White Horse of Wessex, G. K. Chesterton, stand for *the sense of wonder.* Now let the White Horse speak:

" . . . The first and best way of appreciating it is to come of people with a tradition of treating animals properly; of men in the right relation to horses. A boy who remembers his father who rode a horse, who rode it well and treated it well, will know that the relation can be satisfactory and will be satisfied. He will be all the more indignant at the ill-treatment of horses because he knows how they ought to be treated; but he will see nothing but what is normal in a man riding on a horse. He will not listen to the great modern philosopher who explains to him that the horse ought to be riding on the man. He will not pursue the pessimist fancy of Swift and say that men must be despised as monkeys, and horses worshipped as gods. And horse and man together making an image that is to him human and civilized, it will be easy, as it were, to lift horse and man together into something heroic or symbolical; like a vision of St. George in the clouds. The fable of the winged horse will not be wholly unnatural to him and he will know why Ariosto set many a Christian hero in such an airy saddle, and made him the rider of the sky. For the horse has really been lifted up along with man in the wildest fashion in the very word we use when we speak of "chivalry". The very name of the horse has been given to the highest mood and moment of man; so that we might almost say that the handsomest compliment to a man is to call him a horse.

"But if a man has got into a mood in which he is *not* able to feel this sort of wonder . . . he has drifted into a dull mood, in which somebody sitting on a horse means no more than somebody sitting on a chair."

The spirit of this passage is the spirit of the Equestrian School as a whole. And that exuberant statement near its conclusion — "we might almost say that the handsomest compliment to a man is to

call him a horse" — is one to which all the members would subscribe. "I would rather be a horse than a man": that is the motto of the Great Equestrians, and when it is understood aright we are on the way to understanding the meaning of their movement. It is the belief of the Equestrians that we cease to be human when we fail of this equine faculty. For it is surely the capacity to wonder, and to communicate wonder, that makes us human creatures. When we make the mind a mirror, as the White Horse was fond of saying, then we are human. To be non-equine is to be non-human: we then reverse the whole procedure, and, as the moderns have been doing for a generation, proceed to make the mirror a mind. The mentalizing of the mirror is a cumulative process; it has gone on in seemingly endless fashion in literally thousands of poems through which the light of the mirror shines like the intelligence of the sun-divinity, symbol of our divorced condition and of our brazen claim to godhead in despite of God. And of course the mentalizing of the mirror is the atomizing and destruction of the mind. The mind shatters into a thousand pieces at one touch from that flashing ascendancy, the demon in the glass.

And then, of course, The Laughing Horse stands for *the spirit of laughter.* Lawrence knew more than a little of the quivering belly of the horse, of his glossy flanks of laughter:

"Let the Horse laugh. I'm all for a horse that laughs. Though I don't care for him when he merely sniggers.

"I'm all for a horse. It's not even the Houyhnhnms. They aren't blue enough for me. It's a turquoise Centaur who laughs, who laughs longest and laughs last. I believe in him. I believe he's there, over the desert in the south-west. I believe if you'll cajole him with a bit of proper corn, he'll come down to Santa Fe and bite your noses off and then laugh at you again . . .

"It's no good. I've *got* to ride on a laughing horse. The forked radish has ceased to perambulate. I've got to ride a laughing horse. And I whistle for him, call him, spread corn for him, and hold out an apple to him, here in England. No go! No answer! The poor devil's dead and churned into Cambridge sausages. Flabby flaccid, forked radishes, sausages, pairs of sausages in forked skins: these seem to drift about in the soup of the London air. There's no answer . . .

"And yet I've *got* to ride, centaur, on a blue stallion.

"So thanks be to the oldest of Gods, comes a wooden little Laughing Horse sliding down the blue air of the Rockies, riding on

his hobby stick like a rocket, summonsing me to mount and away.

"Hurray! Hup-a-la! Up we go! Like a witch on a broomstick, riding west."

It is a curious thing, but there is almost nothing in modern literature that can be called humour and almost nothing that can be called satire. And yet there is very little in modern literature that cannot be called irony. It can almost never be taken straight; it must almost always be read as if it were ironic and ambiguous in five different ways and on ten different levels at once. So much so in fact, that it is much the safer way for the reader, an act of simple prudence on his part, to read even the simplest-seeming work as if it were wholly complex and unendingly ambiguous. It is all very curious. There is irony, great heaps of it everywhere. There is irony in every possible variation, irony in at least a thousand different forms. And there is almost nothing else. There is not even the faintest trace of satire; not even the palest shadow of humour. I put it down to the modern writer's unadmitted but almost exclusive preoccupation with himself. We know, of course, that modern literature is strictly impersonal in theory, dedicated to a cult of objective correlatives; but we also know that it is wholly personal — or perhaps I should say, wholly self-ish — in its practice. In its most distant reaches, it never escapes the chilling touch of the author's ego. It is obsessed with its hatred of the romantics, but it is far more romantic, in its preoccupation with self, than the romantics could ever have hoped to be. And this is fully evident in its failure to grasp the comic. Its irony is almost always self-irony; its ambiguity is but the mask for its pained laughter at itself. And naturally it cannot manage satire or humour. For these are the most objective of all the literary forms. Satire assumes a community of value, humour an identity of interest, between the writer and his audience. And the modern writer knows of no community save for the community of his seven selves and knows of no identity save for the appalling suggestion of identity among those seven selves. So he can no longer hate with an undiluted hatred just as he can no longer laugh with an unqualified laughter.

A horse that talked would be a phenomenon but a horse that talked only of itself would be a horror. But we would not mind a horse that talked only of horses. We would object to the equine monomaniac as violently as we do to the human one; but we could scarcely deny that the proper study of the equine is the equine. It is

this last principle that operates in the writings of the Talking Bronco. Roy Campbell has always had something to say *to* men, but he has not had a great deal to say *about* men. Whatever his moral, his subject-matter is horses. Because he has said more about horses, and about a greater variety of horses, than any of the Great Equestrians, he has done more than any of them to make the horse glow and shine in his true colours in his native habitat. And yet if the appellation is appropriate in this way, it is rather misleading in another. It is "bronco" that deserves the stress, not the "talking". The "bronco" is almost synonymous with "activity". He is the most furiously energetic of all the horses, a kind of dynamo of the equine world. And among the Equestrians, it is Roy Campbell who is the best representative of the much-abused but important principle of *freedom of action:*

> "So History looks the winner in the mouth
> Though but a dark outsider from the South,
> A talking Bronco, sharked from ear to ear
> With laughter, like a running bandolier,
> With teeth, like bullets fastened in their clips,
> To chew the thunder and to spit the pips,
> Ejecting from the breech, in perfect time,
> The shells of meter and the shucks of rhyme,
> Yet drive the thought with perforating aim
> Like tracer-bullets on their threads of flame.
> Open my lid, inspect my Steinway grin,
> And view the shining ivories within.
> With such a gadget Sampson quelled his foes
> And rained the thundering mitraille of blows,
> When he invented, chopping men like straw,
> The first machine-gun from a Donkey's Jaw . . .
> And what is Pegasus, that mystic force,
> But half an aeroplane and half a horse,
> And half a grand-piano for recitals
> With wires and harp-strings humming in his vitals,
> Expert in every sphere, to sing or fly,
> Or drive a tailshot in MacSpaunday's eye?"

A curious curse seems to have fallen on the writer in our time. The typical writer today is obsessed with the notion that he must be topical. He labours under the illusion that his art must have a con-

temporary quality; he is constantly striving to live up to what he calls the responsibility of living in the contemporary world. I say that he *calls* the process "responsibility", because in his most basic premise of all he denies the very existence of responsibility. If he is bitten by the notion that he must *try to be* contemporary, he is far more seriously afflicted with the notion that he *must* be contemporary — that he could not avoid being contemporary even if he pitted his whole soul and will against it. He has no choice in the matter, no responsibility whatever. He is the victim of a cult that is worse than the most ruthless Asiatic form of monotheism. For he is a worshipper of Time — a god of chameleon shapes who can yet assume the shape of absolute fixity. He knows that this god, in the form he assumes in the twentieth century, will only permit one type of twentieth-century man. Shadings and variations are taboo. Contradictions are blasphemy. All must conform to the twentieth-century type — and so it is that our writer hastens and chastises himself to become what he already assumes he must become. There is no joy in this process; it is determinism of the foulest sort. And it does not have the kick to action of the Calvinist determinism. It leads to inaction everywhere. It produces personalities of the most passive sort — and therefore it inevitably produces an art of the most passive sort. I suppose if there is one quality of modern literature that is most striking of all, it is its despairing passivity, its utter submission to whatever forces may choose to play upon it and work at it from the outside. A writer is no longer a man but an environment.

Hence the enormous significance of the Talking Bronco. Even if he did nothing but kick over the traces, bust out of the corral and race off madly in all directions, he would still be a wonderfully stimulating spectacle. That would be a splendid beginning. Action of any kind is better than the horrors of inaction. And of course action is a principle which we find in all literature. Not all literature is heroic in intent but all literature that is worthy of the name is heroic in effect. It simulates action and it stimulates to action. It breaks down the barriers between the imagination and reality, throwing out roadways through the wilderness of the world. It not only talks like a bronco; it throws its heels about like one. It is the swift kick that sends us sailing into the freedom of action.

And now we come to the Lizard-Horse, the transfigured spirit of C. S. Lewis. I have not attempted to evaluate the achievements of the Great Equestrians, vis a vis one another, and I do not intend to

do so now, but I think you will have no trouble in seeing that the Lizard-Horse is in a way the whole foundation of the Equestrian tradition. He is the principle who makes all the other things possible; without him, we could not have the sense of wonder or the spirit of laughter or the freedom of action represented by the various other horses. Not that he is unique; there is something of the spirit of the Lizard-Horse in the White Horse of Wessex, in the Laughing Horse and in the Talking Bronco. But the Lizard-Horse has this quality par excellence and it is a quality that might be summed up in the phrase *the power of conscience.* He is the final answer to the brazen claim of the sun-divinity, the idolatrous claim that the proper worship for mankind is man.

"For a moment I could make out nothing distinctly. Then I saw, between me and the nearest bush, unmistakably solid but growing every moment solider, the upper arm and the shoulder of a man. Then, brighter still and stronger, the legs and the hands. The neck and golden head materialised while I watched, and if my attention had not wavered I should have seen the actual completing of a man — an immense man, naked, not much smaller than the Angel. What distracted me was the fact that at the same moment something seemed to be happening to the Lizard. At first I thought the operation had failed. So far from dying, the creature was still struggling and even growing bigger as it struggled. And as it grew it changed. Its hinder parts grew rounder. The tail, still flickering, became a tail of hair that flickered between huge and glossy buttocks. Suddenly I started back, rubbing my eyes. What stood before me was the greatest stallion I have ever seen, silvery white but with mane and tail of gold. It was smooth and shining, rippled with swells of flesh and muscle, whinneying and stamping with its hooves. At each stamp the land shook and the trees dwindled . . .

'Do ye understand all this, my Son?' said the Teacher.

'I don't know about *all,* Sir,' said I. 'Am I right in thinking the Lizard really turned into the Horse?'

'Aye. But it was killed first. Ye'll not forget that part of the story?'

'I'll try not to, Sir. But does it mean that everything — that is in us can go on to the Mountains?'

'Nothing, not even the noblest and best, can go on as it is now. Nothing, not even what is lowest and most bestial, will not be

raised again if it submits to death. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. Flesh and Blood cannot come to the Mountains. Not because they are too rank, but because they are too weak. What is a Lizard compared with a stallion? Lust is a poor, weak, whimpering, whispering thing compared with that richness and energy of desire which will arise when lust has been killed.' "

The lizard is not only the symbol of lust but of all overweening desires. Or he represents an attitude towards desires (so common to modern literature) that turns and twists them from their proper nature. He is the embodiment of expressionism. He insists on our expressing what we feel. He helps us to discover feelings that we scarcely knew we could feel. He is the excavator of the subconscious, the creature who projects our dreams and transforms them into realities. And he tells us that this process of projection is his and our proper business in life. He insists that what we feel, and above all what we scarcely know we feel, is the only thing that is real. All values are relative — so he whispers to us — but every feeling is absolute. And the only way to get rid of him is by changing him into the horse. Only by that sundering act of transformation, only by the power of conscience and by the power behind conscience, can we cease to be the slave of the lizard and become his master. Only when their foul mouthpiece is born again will the desires be able to speak in the clarity of their true voices.

Let me say only one thing in conclusion. Because modern literary decadence has denied the truth of the Lizard-Horse, it has led us to the verge of destruction. That is why one cannot lament as the prospect of its own destruction becomes a certainty. That is why one rejoices at the thought of the Equestrian School, this durable fifth column that has been operating all the time in the unsuspecting citadel. It is not in its true nature, but it is inevitable that the Equestrian School should play the role of the Trojan Horse. Some night it will unload its fatal cargo on the sleeping citizens. Then will follow the swift and decisive slaughter; then will come the utter razing of the city till not a stone is left standing. But this is one Trojan Horse that is synonymous with the spirit of Troy. It is the spirit of heroic Troy that the Equestrian School brings back into literature. It rears up the lizard of cowardice into the snorting stallion of chivalrous valour. And though it brings a dawn of terrible carnage, it will still be a dawn of splendid hope.

Wilfred Owen: Poetry, Pity and Prophecy

Dennis S. R. Welland

When W. B. Yeats excluded from *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse* the poets of the Great War he gave "the same reason that made Arnold withdraw his *Empedocles on Etna* from circulation; passive suffering is not a theme for poetry." Not all war poetry is restricted to the expression of passive suffering, and the poetry of Wilfred Owen in particular notably transcends that level. In a statement that has been quoted more often than it has been fully understood Owen wrote "Above all I am not concerned with Poetry. My subject is War, and the pity of War. The Poetry is in the pity." It is to be hoped that one day more of his juvenilia may be published for they make abundantly clear the meaning of this passage. Owen's reading of poetry had been almost exclusively Romantic : Keats, Shelley, Tennyson, Swinburne, Wilde and the Georgians whom he revered. That, for him, was "Poetry", and the extent to which his unpublished early pieces derived from these sources makes the more significant this renunciation of their influence. Time and again in his manuscript drafts of his war poems he describes a scene and in doing so slides quickly into a derivative, facilely Romantic idiom, but all these "purple patches" are firmly expunged : this was not what he wanted. Had it been he would no more have been read today than are the many soldier-poets who described the suffering they saw. Of their work an anonymous reviewer in *The Nation* wrote, in 1917 : "It is their grim and shattering destiny, their tragedy, rather than the destiny and tragedy of war that is revealed . . . Poetry is unable to cope with or contain war."

At that time nothing of Wilfred Owen's had been published to refute this conclusion; it was'to cope with and contain' war most powerfully, but it was to do more than that. The label "war poet" has obscured for others besides Yeats the central importance of Owen.

Not only was he the innovator who introduced and established half-rhyme in English verse, but he was a major poet whose faith in man makes his work as eloquent and as vital in peace as in war. His interpretation of his own age may not have had the authority of *The Waste Land;* there are limits to the claims that one can make for him as an intellectual poet; but the tragedy of his early death has given rise to too much emphasis on him as an "inheritor of unfulfilled renown" who never reached maturity. When the definitive biography of Owen is written the immaturity of his personality and achievement before August 1917 will throw into remarkable prominence the quality and development of his work in the last fourteen months of his life, but even without this comparative basis the purpose and intrinsic merit of his poetry is readily demonstrable.

When he was invalided back to England in 1917 he used to carry in his pocket a set of photographs shewing the effects of war on the men who took part in it; these he would display to the armchair warriors when their belligerence nauseated him. His poems were intended to serve a similar purpose: to expose the futility and bestiality of war in all its revolting grimness, to horrify his readers into a constructive policy of peace that should make war impossible. Perhaps in our more cynical wisdom we no longer feel the problem can be solved so easily, but that does not detract from the integrity of Owen's attempt, and part of the attraction that he had for the young poets of the 1930s was the closeness of his poetry to the greatest ethical and political issues facing the society of his day; and because his insight into these issues was in advance of his contemporaries' his method of poetic expression was closer to that of Auden than of Rupert Brooke.

In his desire to shock his readers out of their lethargy it would have been fatally easy to exaggerate and to play upon the reader's sentimentality. Owen's appeal is emotional but never sentimental : it is disciplined by a war-bred masculinity and restraint. His friend Siegfried Sassoon has rightly said of him "He never wrote his poems (as so many war poets did) to make the effect of a personal gesture. He pitied others; he did not pity himself". It is this remarkable selflessness, this absence of self-pity, that gives his work its width and its validity. Consider a poem such as his famous "Futility": here an elegy for one soldier, unnamed and not individualized, becomes more even than a requiem for the war-dead; by a natural and easy transition it moves towards the cosmic resentment of

O what made fatuous sunbeams toil
To break earth's sleep at all?

The wealth of scorn implicit in the choice of "fatuous" — an epithet that Thomas Hardy would have chosen in a similar context — and the bitterness of the whole couplet seem close to the Sophoclean "Not to have been born at all were best", but that is not the point of this poem. Sophocles, having reached a conclusion, makes a statement where Owen asks a question and leaves it unanswered. The lines that precede it are a reassertion of the value of life:

Are limbs so dear-achieved, are sides
Full-nerved, still warm, too hard to stir?

True pity implies a code of values: you can only pity a person when you can visualize better conditions which have been denied him. Sophocles pities the living for not being dead, while Owen pities the dead for not being alive. The controlled sensuousness of his emphasis on physical life in this poem — limbs, sides, sinews and warmth — are evidence of a positive belief. Life is not, as Sweeney thought, merely a matter of "birth, and copulation, and death". The reference to the sun waking the seeds invites us to think of the whole natural process of organic development. A kind of Shelleyan pantheism in which, even in war and death, man remains always part of the living cosmos is an important tenet of Owen's belief reflected all through his poetry. Thus the cripple in "Wild with all Regrets" soliloquizes:

Spring air would find its own way to my lung
And grow me legs as quick as lilac shoots.

The parallel poem, "A Terre", is subtitled "Being the Philosophy of Many Soldiers" and uses even more explicitly this same line of thought to reconcile man to his destiny.

Romanticism and his early religious upbringing combine to keep alive in Owen what Ruskin called a "personal religion of humanity" and what Owen himself calls pity. It is a pity that is far from passive. When, in other war poets, pity becomes passive it does so because they are stating an attitude to death rather than to life. Brooke's sonnets are not unique in trying to arouse pity for a dead soldier without taking realistic cognizance of how and why he died. If your pity is only for the dead there are no practical steps towards which that pity can lead you. The temptation then is towards that indulgence of sentiments for their own sake that constitutes sentimentality. If, on the other hand, your pity embraces the dead, the maimed and the living, if it is conditioned by a belief in a potentiality

that they are being prevented from fulfilling, then you can try to do something about altering those conditions to prevent a recurrence of this futility and devastation. This is what pity meant to Wilfred Owen; this was his theme, and not passive suffering.

Because it has its basis in fact and experience his poetry avoids sensationalism as well as sentimentality. This realism is nowhere more felicitous than in his imagery, though that imagery is, by his standards, "unpoetically" belittling instead of Romantically expansive. In their context his two descriptions of dawn are superb: for his shell-shocked "Mental Cases" "Dawn breaks open like a wound that bleeds afresh", while "Exposure" contains the dawn of the trenches with its dual suggestion of the bleak sky and the dawn attack of the Germans in field grey:

Dawn, massing in the east his melancholy army,
Attacks once more in ranks on shivering ranks of grey.

One further instance, from "S.I.W.", :

Courage leaked, as sand
From the best sandbags after years of rain.

In Edmund Blunden's edition of Owen appears a short poem which Mr. Blunden entitles "Fragment: a Farewell" and which illustrates well Owen's control and development of his imagery. Like "Futility", with which it is comparable in other ways, it is pregnant with much more meaning than might at first appear. This time there is no specific mention of war, and its description of death looks more imaginative, more ornamented than usual in Owen, but this creation of imagery is quickly seen to be much more disciplined than in his juvenilia. Its opening line, the only hint of war in the poem, has a richly sensuous note that prepares us for the more expansive imagery that follows it. Elsewhere, as in the quotations just mentioned, nature is compared to man and the works of man; nature and death are connected only in terms of ugliness. Here the process is reversed. This poem achieves its unity by its consistently cosmic imagery. The dying man is pictured in terms of the universe: "like a Sun", "clouding", "the heavens of his cheek", "cold stars" and "skies"; and yet paradoxically this magnification of the individual does not produce any sense of exaltation. The first five lines maintain an equilibrium — they are indeed "half gleam, half glower" — but in the last three the image, being more fully developed, takes charge and dwarfs by its stern grandeur the dying man:

The cold stars lighting, very old and black,
In different skies.

The emotion has been transferred from the subject to the image: it is not a man that is dying but a universe, and language that might have been used to give sublimity to this microcosm's death has instead been employed to conjure up a chilling vision of a doomed world. There is added force in the suggestion the last line carries of "indifferent skies"; the play on words may be as deliberate as the near-pun on curses and corpses at the beginning of "The Sentry". It may even be questioned whether this is a "fragment"; the manuscript has the appearance of a fair copy and no evidence of further lines being intended. In its brevity it has a unity and an evocative power, and any impression of incompleteness may be adequately attributed to the mood of doubt it is designed to communicate.

In many of his best poems Owen is, as here, exploring contrasts, antitheses between two states of being, past and present in "Exposure" and "Hospital Barge," the present and a problematical future in "The Send-Off" and "Asleep," life and death in "Asleep" and "Spring Offensive". In his last period he enlarges his work to enable it to cope with the great poetic verities he had tentatively sought after in his juvenilia, and in his preoccupation with eternity he sees death not as an end to life but as a transition between two existences. Christianity is an important influence behind these poems, but they are not, in the strictest sense, Christian. "Spring Offensive", one of his greatest poems, deserves careful study for its imaginative communication of the soldier's nervous tension in moments of crisis, and also for its delicately weighed balance between life and death. Although Owen is always at his best when writing from his own experience, his poems are seldom reportage. If "Dulce et Decorum Est" is compared with "The Sentry", which was written later, the similarity of theme is no more remarkable than the difference of treatment. Where one is shrill in its near-hysterical indignation the other is much more disturbing, more lasting in its effect, because the incident is not being recorded in white-heat. Instead the poetic imagination has been allowed to work on the experience more fully, to "dissolve, diffuse and dissipate in order to re-create" exactly as Coleridge described the process.

Owen himself seems to have been conscious of this need to withdraw a little from his material the better to present it. Sometimes, perharps with Hardy's *The Dynasts* in mind, he deliberately chooses an aerial vantage point ("The Show") from which in the closing lines he swoops down in a kestrel-like descent anticipatory of the move-

ment of many of W. H. Auden's early lyrics. In Auden, however, this fondness for heights that characterises his poetry leads often to a disdainful aloofness that is quite alien to Owen's intention, and in general Owen is more successful when he avoids the dangers of this by using a dream technique to effect his withdrawal from the all-consuming reality. "Mental Cases" has a powerful nightmare quality, but his masterpiece is that haunting vision "Strange Meeting".

Title and situation seem, as a friend has suggested to me, to have their genesis in Shelley's *The Revolt of Islam* Canton V, but the credit for what he does with this hint belongs to Owen alone. Mr. Sassoon's description of the poem as Owen's "passport to immortality and his elegy to the unknown warriors of all nations" is no exaggeration, but "Strange Meeting" differs from other such elegies in evoking our pity for the loss of these men to society and civilization rather than to their friends and families. Other poets mourning the cutting off of youth before its prime may envisage the world becoming poorer by the loss, but they do not think of it as becoming worse. They regret its impoverishment but see no danger of its imminent bankruptcy, because, tacitly or explicitly, they assume that the progress which the war has interrupted can be resumed by its survivors when it ends. Owen's vision is more penetrating and less comfortable. The war has not merely interrupted the march of mankind, it has changed its whole direction and done incalculable and irreparable damage. It is this terrible prophetic vision of a dying world that marks Owen off from his contemporaries.

Although Owen was less consciously seeking symbols and creating myths for his theme than was his brother-poet, Isaac Rosenberg, the dead enemy of "Strange Meeting" becomes his most eloquent symbol. He is the force of positive development which the war had, by 1918, destroyed, destroying with it the hope of the future and undoing the work of the past. Pity cannot detract from the withering irony of Owen's reference to "the undone years, the hopelessness", and pity is no substitute for the sense of desolation and finality of this poem. There was a time for pity, a time when something might have been salvaged from the carnage, but it is too late now: the truth remains untold, that truth which is "The pity of war, the pity war distilled". Sadly Owen foresees the disintegration of values, the retrogression of humanity involved in this second Fall:

> Now men will go content with what we spoiled.
> Or, discontent, boil bloody, and be spilled.

So abundantly has this been fulfilled since 1918 that it is not easy to recognize the prophetic power of Owen divining this before the war was ended; similarly, events in many quarters of the world are still giving a new relevance to another apparently simple statement:

None will break ranks, though nations trek from progress,

Only the men who had fought and died in the war, had, in Owen's belief, been vouschafed an insight into the truth, but it was too late to put that knowledge to any constructive use, it was impossible for them, except in death,

To miss the march of this retreating world
Into vain citadels that are not walled.

Here is the last flourish of that messianic impulse which Christianity and Romanticism had combined to implant in Owen. He had realized the impossibility of achieving progress through war, and in one of his simplest but most effective lines he indicts himself as much as anyone else for the destruction of this opportunity:

"I am the enemy you killed, my friend".

The utterance is characteristic, though he may have had in mind the line of Oscar Wilde that he had used in an early poem "For each man kills the thing he loves". On this note of frustrated idealism the poem ends with the invitation "Let us sleep now . . . " but this sleep of hopeless resignation is, to quote another of his poems,

. . . less tremulous, less cold,
Than we who must awake, and waking, say Alas!

As in all his greatest poems the tragedy of war is the tragedy of the living, the survivors who have been deprived of the salvation that the war dead might have offered them. Yet its effect is not wholly negative. By writing it Owen is hoping to counteract something of the destruction it foresees, and though subsequent history has proved him unsuccessful in averting it the very courage, the undaunted faith in human nature which led him to make the attempt and to leave us this urgent expression of the wisdom he had learnt in war give his testimony a new value. That desire for service by the individual to his fellows which underlies all Owen's work as clearly as it does "Strange Meeting" can be as stimulating to others as it was to him.

Owen's is a body of poetry rich in its implications, wide in its range, and sure in its technique. Fittingly, "Strange Meeting", for which he is best known, is also rich, complex, and technically perfect. Nowhere does he use half-rhyme more sensitively or to better effect. The theme here treated as dominant is by no means its only one. The

poem is symbolic, not allegorical, and the dead enemy stands for other things as well as the lost opportunity. He is, at one level, the spokesman of the German war dead, commenting that war is not between individuals, who are much the same the world over; and if he is, in the sense indicated above, Owen's anti-self, there is another sense in which he represents Owen's self. It is Owen's own elegy that he speaks and it is Owen's own spiritual progress from the artificial aestheticism of his juvenilia to the altruistic, splendid pity of these last poems that the enemy's speech records.

"Strange Meeting" is itself eloquent tribute to the truth of its own message: reading it we can the more readily believe that post-1918 history would have been very different had the tragic generation of doomed youth not been annihilated, and that post-1918 poetry would have been richer had Owen lived. If, as Sidney affirmed, the poet is "*vates,* a seer", then Owen is a great poet and "Strange Meeting" is not unworthy of a place beside "The Waste Land" and "The Second Coming" as an imaginative diagnosis of its times. If, as more recent criticism suggests, the criterion of poetic greatness is the range, complexity, and depth of thought and feeling which a poem is capable of evoking, then by this test too "Strange Meeting" is Owen's "passport to immortality".

BOOKS

THE SHAME AND GLORY OF THE INTELLECTUALS, by Peter Viereck. The Beacon Press, Boston. 309 pp. Amer. price $4.00.

The glory of the intellectuals, Professor Viereck tells us, was their courageous and principled stand against Fascist and Nazi totalitarianism. As the dominantly urgent necessity of the moment, that is now a thing of the past. The shame of the intellectuals, particularly of the American intellectuals, is their failure to take a like stand against Communism. Communism embodies the same sins, the same errors, the same heresies. It is at least equally brutal, bloody, and bestial. It needs to be combatted with at least equal energy. But too many intellectuals refuse the challenge. They are loftily indifferent; they are confusedly liberal; they appease, they indulge in fellow-travelling. At the best, in their proper desire not to ignore the mote in their own eye, that is, the abuses and injustices of American socciety or in the practice of Western imperial powers, they cavalierly ignore the beam in the eye of their polar enemy. Given the truly fundamental character of bi-polar conflict, such neglect cannot be excused on the ground that ills nearer home demand our first and greatest attention. They must indeed be attended to, as Mr. Viereck himself repeatedly insists. But for the intellectual, whose proper concern is universal principle and the universe to which it pertains, to give them such myopic attention is not merely the error of parochialism; it is treason, *la trahison des clercs,* the betrayal of calling and of duty. It is, moreover, suicide, since it destroys the essential meaning and the claim to respect which the intellectual properly makes. It encourages the repression and the murder of his fellows; and, by justifiably undermining respect for the whole class at home, threatens its liquidation as a leadership group in our society.

Mr. Viereck, it is necessary to emphasize, is no mere red-baiter who seeks easy popularity by climbing on the band-wagon of the heresy hunters and endorsing current hysterias based on ignoble fear. His criticism of McCarthyism and of the vulgar business ethics of mere self-interest unmarked by public spiritedness and unconcerned with public welfare are as clear and positive as his indictments of those he has dubbed Communazis. He selects Stalinist totalitarianism as his chief target, just because it is the greatest danger in our time

and place. It is the enemy of human freedom; of Christian conscience; of rational values; of the constitutional method which alone permits the achievement and maintenance of man's intellectual and spiritual insights; of human dignity; and of those very liberties, civil and academic, which are the inescapable preconditions of the intellectual's calling.

His sub-title, *Babbitt Junior versus the Rediscovery of Values,* clarifies his stand. It is needful to rediscover values, to reassert the moral nature of man. It is needful to combat materialism, relativism, positivism. While the totalitarian tyranny is the most ruthless enemy without, these are the enemies within. They are buttressed and their spread is facilitated by the conforming conventionalism of professed intellectuals who have forgotten the duty of independence and devotion to the search for truth and to its expression without fear or favor. Sinclair Lewis' old Babbitt was no doubt crass and vulgar. But he was no poseur, and he made no pretentions to intellectual superiority or aesthetic discrimination. But his successor, Mr. Viereck tells us, is Gaylord Babbitt. As conformist and cliché-ridden as his father, he is also *avant-garde.* He claims to be sophisticated, in the know. He professes to be an intellectual and aesthetic leader, and he looks with the standardized contempt of his now very large coterie on the vulgar philistines of practical affairs. Yet he himself lacks all critical discrimination. He makes a cult of functionalism in architecture, and in the industrial arts, without any real understanding of function. He praises non-representational painting without concern for the quality or meaning that underlies its abstractness. He is contemptuous of the great art and artists of the Western past, when he is not ignorant of them and their work. He delights in asymmetry, atonality, absence of rhyme, and absence of capitals. But he never penetrates behind the forms and techniques so as to discover whether or not they are used to convey an appropriate meaning. All modernist novelties are created free and equal, and are equally exempt from criticism. All inherited classics are old fashioned and unfashionable, and all traditions are confining strait-jackets which hamper the free-floating spirit by imposing disciplined techniques.

Gaylord Babbitt does not warrant the dignity of being called a radical, and he has neither the courage nor the conviction to be a communist. But his pseudo-élitist contempt for tradition, his inability to endure the agony requisite to ethical insight and conviction, and his frantic need for ready-made solutions which must also appear modern

and allow him to appear liberal, lead him into unconsidered defenses of communists and irresponsible flirtations with communism without any awareness that he is on the brink of political treason, and guilty of a more profound moral treason.

While the type Mr. Viereck so acidly etches has real existence and conceivably continues to proliferate, my own judgment would be that it is on the decrease, and that really good specimens have by now become collectors' items quite hard to come by. Mr. Viereck's satire may therefore appear already out of date and unfair to even professedly advanced intellectuals. Moreover, while his treatment of Gaylord Babbitt is only a small part of the whole work, wherein he uses a great variety of techniques and levels of writing to put over his essential points to different reader groups, it may seem unfairly to imply through association a normal guilt on the part of most intellectuals. That, clearly, is not Mr. Viereck's purpose. But I think the striking and pathetic figure of Gaylord distracts attention from Viereck's more serious and sustained criticism of those decently sincere liberals who lack penetration and creativity, and from honest and misguided ardor continue to mouth and to apply a rather weird combination of doctrines derived from John Stuart Mill and Karl Marx, whose central teachings were simple, but largely alternative and naturally exclusive, interpretations and directives for a simpler age. The consequence of the combination is that strength of conviction and indignation is matched by absence of disinterested justice. The outcome is unwarranted support for the immoralities of tyranny in the name of liberty, inadequate appreciation of our own achievements, lack of creativeness in the conservative adaptation of liberal principles to fit the new needs of our own time, and an unintentional endorsement of all those forces and attitudes which tend to dehumanize man and make liberty itself meaninglessly unimportant.

That these ills, even when they do not have the marks of pseudo-sophistication, at once glamorous and idiotic, of Gaylord Babbitt, are very widely pervasive, even a casual knowledge of university and other intellectual circles makes convincingly clear. Yet to appeal to the clarity and courage of the truly pioneering and genuinely free intellectual, as Mr. Viereck does, is not enough. His own exposure of the more naive sins of the liberal intellectual of good will but limited penetration may indeed prove educational by leading to critical self-examination among members of the class. Unfortunately, Professor Viereck's own indignation, however reasonable, may irritate

to an at least equal indignation those who are conscious of their integrity, their decency, and the nobility of their motives, but are sensitive to impeachment of their judgment and their profundity.

Actually, Mr. Viereck has hit upon, without in any sense solving, a very difficult problem of our time and place. The number of certified intellectuals, of teachers and professors, of M.A.'s and Ph.D.'s, has in recent times very greatly increased, to meet the demands of education, of government, and of industry. Yet, quite apart from genius, creative minds capable of developing and furthering tradition and of reshaping the application of principles to fit new needs are always in short supply. The majority of our intellectual class is almost bound to be composed of uncreative minds. Such persons can grasp, and attach themselves to, great ideas which constitute the inherited framework of opinion and conviction derived from an immediately preceding generation. They take sides in controversies inherited from the past, which in the present become word and opinion battles little related to current situations or actual needs; and, in such almost polar opposition they will, with decency and a desire for enlightenment, take the professedly liberal and progressive side.

Nor has the growth of specialization in the various studies aided enlightenment or promoted clear understanding of the issues of our time, or favored critical insight as against a doctrinaire progressivism. Moreover, much of the recent concern for overcoming narrowness has promoted facile use of clichés and slick generalizations from related fields, and has resulted in the illusion of competence and knowledge. Finally, the misguided emphasis on oneway communication, on writers being readily understood by effortless readers, has given a differential advantage to the popularizer of stereotypes and to the corrupting inflation of debased intellectual coinage. It has actually obscured or made more difficult the dissemination of reflective insights into actual social conditions and political needs. To blame the intellectual by profession who is not also one by calling and conviction for an ideological time-lag and for the aforementioned debasement, is manifestly futile and unfair. But to overcome the consequences of his mental climate and of his influence remains a vital and hitherto unsolved problem. It is at least important to recognize that this *trahison des clercs* is to a large degree not deliberate treason on their part, but results from a false labelling, with sad consequences in expectation and influence, of the retail clerks of our chain store intellectual market place.

For the rest, while I am keenly aware that at various points Mr. Viereck has overstated and oversimplified his position and his analysis, I find that his overall argument is weighty, balanced, and correct. It is a passionate plea for the intellectual, for the security of his role, and for his making himself worthy of that role. It is a plea that he has a special interest or concern for the preservation of universal values by and for free and finite man, and for their institutional insurance by the method of freedom within the constitutional order where, as servant of the goods of all humanity, he ought to hold and rate a special position of influence consequent on functional performance in its defense and furtherance. While Mr. Viereck can scarcely be accused of naive optimism or of unchastened commitment to the thesis of inevitable progress, he does note and commemorate the fact of the recent increase of such leadership through men of courage and clarity, and he does sense their growing impact on contemporary American society. He fears only that they are still too few, and that their influence on and through a broader professional intelligentsia may come too late. In a very real sense his book is intended to create the conditions for a change of heart and head which he hopes may prevent that grim disaster.

THOMAS I. COOK

A BOY IN THE HOUSE, by Mazo de la Roche. Macmillan, Toronto. 124 pp., $1.75

I recently drew fire by declaring that Mazo de la Roche is a much better novelist than most Canadian critics give her credit for being. If she had wished to justify my contention, she could not have done better than to publish this short novel, which reveals her art at or near its best. It has clarity of style, symmetry of structure, accuracy of description, unity of tone, power of theme, and above all a keen sensitivity of characterization.

Whatever the reason, the average Canadian intellectual's conception of Mazo de la Roche seems to be a sort of Peg's Own Paper serialist. According to this view, a novel by her with the title *A Boy in the House* should be the story of how two lonely elderly ladies adopted an orphan boy, re-discovered their zest for life, and brought the boy up to be the earnest occupant of some influential position. The reality is very different. An orphan boy is hired by two elderly

ladies who already have as their paying guest a man who is writing his first novel; the boy immediately arouses the jealous possessiveness of the three older residents of the house; they struggle for him, and in the struggle one of the sisters murders the other and allows the boy to bear the blame; at the end of the book the boy is in a reformatory, his only hope for the future the possibility that the literary gentleman may one day be able to care for him.

Plot outlines seldom do justice to a book, and the above outline is no exception: I give it simply to indicate how it differs from normal expectations of Miss de la Roche's work. The power of the book is not in the plot, but in the way in which its successive developments are made to seem natural and indeed inevitable. There is a fine economy and cogency about the book: natural description, imagery, dialogue, and situation are all used functionally, so that not a word is wasted and not a single false trail is started.

In its severe economy, and its complete lack of concessions to popular taste, this novel is something of an exception among Miss de la Roche's books. Though there is a hard core of significance in nearly all her novels, she has usually allowed herself the luxury of digressions, descriptive padding, and a certain amount of pleasant whimsy to keep the patrons of the circulating libraries happy. Here there is much greater austerity and restraint, as if she had decided that she could afford now, as she nears seventy, to take her eye off the public and write purely to satisfy her own artistic conscience.

A Boy in the House is austere de la Roche — but it is recognizably de la Roche all the same. There is her usual theme, the theme of so much romantic literature from Beowulf to Yeats, that of the terrifying but fascinating power of the primitive. As in so many of the "Jalna" books, we begin with a superficially peaceful but subterraneously explosive setting into which a provocative intruder enters, bringing destruction. There is the usual de la Roche interest in birds, animals, and insects, both as things which fascinate her in themselves and as symbols of the primitive forces at work. There is the usual sensitive observation of hands (probably again because of their primitive expressiveness), so that we find such phrases as "her hands - - - swooped like amorous birds", "a transparent hand", "a nervous hand", "his childish hands", "his hands were white and clean, with the cleanliness of the hospital", and "He stood staring at the hand that held the knife — a strong, capable hand . . . " There is the usual de la Roche delight in the suggestive metaphor or simile — "Their ugly

clothes thrown off like dark cocoons, they had emerged airy, graceful, free as birds", and "It was so bright he could see the separate blades of grass like tiny metal spears."

Above all, as I have said, there is the usual de la Roche power of vivid characterization. Whatever else about Mazo de la Roche may be debateable, there can be no doubt that in Grandmother Whiteoak she has created the most memorable figure in Canadian fiction. In this novel there is no single person to equal that old harridan, but the four main characters are all complex, distinct, and compelling, and the relationships between them are consistently interesting and credible. The boy himself, strange compound of innocence and evil, of tenderness and savagery, of humility and arrogance, is perhaps the outstanding creation of the book, but there is also a fascinating ambiguity about each of the sisters and about the literary visitor.

There is a temptation, of course, for a critic to go too far in praise of a book or author when he feels that justice has not been done. I am conscious that I may have fallen prey to that temptation in my appraisal of Mazo de la Roche in general and of *A Boy in the House* in particular. I can only record my present conviction, which time and greater wisdom may modify, that Mazo de la Roche is by far the most interesting and clever woman novelist that Canada has yet produced, and that *A Boy in the House* is a sensitive and finely integrated novel fully worthy of her talents.

DESMOND PACEY.

TRIAL OF A CITY, by Earle Birney. The Ryerson Press: Toronto. 71 pp. $2.50.

Of Earle Birney three things may be said that can be said of too few other Canadian poets of his generation: he continues to write, to write well and copiously, and to write differently. *Trial of a City* combines his earlier predominantly lyric expression with the colloquial aptness and satiric bite of Turvey. The title-poem presents in dramatic form a Public Hearing into the Proposed Damnation of Vancouver. It contains numerous references to things that did happen or could have happened in Vancouver's history, but what is intended is not a judgment on that city as a definite individual community; it is a lively presentation of the disadvantages and benefits of modern urban civilization, set against other historical and pre-historical epochs. The

typical, not the unique aspects of the city are of chief importance. This is clearly deliberate; the setting is removed from concrete actuality; even the time of the action is a carefully indeterminate future.

The device is legitimate, and of proved effectiveness. The most lively way of portraying the general is in the particular, especially if one has a partly satiric intent. Blake is a notable example, and seems to have left his mark. More obvious is the influence of James Joyce, both in the use of earlier styles of English writing, though for the sake of apt expression rather than of parody, and in the brilliant handling of Joycean double-talk in the speech of Counsel for the Office of the Future. No one since Joyce has to my knowledge handled this device as effectively as it is handled here; it is always promptly intelligible, and always illuminating; it is not a mere verbal trick, but an expansion of significance.

In form, the poem is a morality play. It has no characters, in the ordinary sense of the word; least of all has its ostensible central figure, the City, a distinct personality, but the other characters too are personified points of view and in their appearances are restricted with admirable economy to the expression of these points of view. This is entirely legitimate, since they are being summoned to give evidence in court, and all the reader needs to know about them personally he already knows from history, tradition, or his general conception of the type they represent. Though types, they are not flat abstractions. The play carries into print the movement and excitement of the spoken word. The characters are clearly differentiated not only in their backgrounds, attitudes, and choice of words, but in the very rhythm of their speech. The vulgarity of P. S. Legion, Counsel for the Metropolis of Vancouver, the dignity of the Indian chief, the austere passion of Long Will of Longland are aptly and convincingly presented.

In delineation of types, and in verbal dexterity, the poem is admirable; in satire it is frequently heavy, but often effective; in evocation of the Indian culture it is imaginative, sympathetic, and moving. Its separate scenes will be read with pleasure and profit — at least until the last of them. For this reader at least, the poem there falls apart. A well-prepared verdict of condemnation is suspended on grounds whose humanitarian and theological propriety cannot conceal or redeem the sentimentality of the presentation or the brusque reversal of the poem's mood and action. Perhaps this reversal was intended from the first; perhaps it does credit to the author's sociological

insight, as it certainly does to his humane sympathy; but it plays havoc with the poem as a work of art, and for this reason fails to generate the conviction that it should — indeed it does not seem to express the conviction which one feels the author really has. It is a hard thing to say, but the effect is almost that of a Hollywood ending, and what is wrong with Hollywood endings is not that they are untrue to life — a charge which could be proved only by statistics which, so far as I know, no one has ever gathered — but that they are untrue to art. The movement and vigour of the rest of the poem, however, will incline the reader to indulgence here.

The shorter poems at the end of the book include a sketchy aerial survey of Canadian geography, vivid and suggestive in the scenes inside the plane; as far as the outer world is concerned, a trip from Boston to Seattle would not need to be very differently presented. A couple of rather lumbering and unfortunate short satirical poems follow; the reader would be well advised to turn to the last pages, where *Climbers* and *Images in Place of Logging* recapture the freshness and sharpness of imagery, the sense of space and mass, that make Mr. Birney one of the few poets that have ever grappled successfully with mountain scenery, and recapture too the sense of irony that impregnates his descriptions with human significance. The last poem in the book, *St. Valentine is Past,* is a subtly moving and haunting incantation to which perhaps many readers, even while acknowledging the force and solidity of the title poem, will return more often than to anything else in the book.

L. A. MacKAY.

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Contributors

DELMAS W. ABBOTT, a young American writer, has also contributed to *Quarto* and the *California Quarterly.*

ROY CAMPBELL'S most recent publication is a translation of Cousin Basilio, a Portuguese novel by Eca Queiroz. He is just completing a successful lecture tour of Canada and the United States under the sponsorship of the Northern Review Press.

THOMAS I. COOK is a professor of political science at John Hopkins University.

NICHOLAS JOOST, who is acting editor of *Poetry (Chicago)*, has also contributed to *The Commonweal.*

L. A. MacKAY is well-known to Canadian readers for his poetry and criticism.

DESMOND PACEY teaches English at the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton, N.B. His handbook, *Creative Writing in Canada,* was published recently.

PETER VIERECK is the author of numerous prose writings, the most recent of which is *The Shame and Glory of the Intellectuals.* His books of verse include *Terror and Decorum,* awarded a Pulitzer prize in 1949.

DENNIS S. R. WELLAND, an English writer, has been visiting North America on a Rockefeller Foundation grant.

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